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Who owns a computer?
Who *will* own a computer?

A winning addition
to a growing hospital

How many practices
fit under one roof?

JANUARY 1990

veterinary economics

THE MAGAZINE OF PRACTICE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

ARE YOU READY FOR THE 1990s?

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT IN A NEW DECADE

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JANUARY 1990

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MEMO FROM THE EDITOR

Resolutions for a new decade

Besides the confetti on your floor, will a new decade make a difference in your practice? According to the authors we contacted for this issue, it should. Although one day is likely to look much like the next, and not too terribly different from the day before, changes are afoot—changes that could make a substantial difference in the way you practice.

We've profiled some of these changes and challenges here, and raised the flag for recognizing and meeting your clients' changing needs. We've also peered into what may be the future of veterinary arrangements—running several practices under one roof, finding feasible finances to expand an existing facility, eliminating management duties altogether. But on page 48, sandwiched between information designed to prepare you for this decade, is an eloquent caution.

Don Dooley's article on not believing everything you read might also be construed as an attempt to put this magazine out of business; but I think his true intention is to keep you *in* business. He wants you to be inspired by what your colleagues write and report, and to see in their management predictions and solutions the potential for your own practice. But he doesn't want you to go out and do what they say—unless you fully understand the endeavor and are committed to it and to the results it may bring.

Ignoring the changes that face your profession in the coming decade won't make them go away, but jumping on every bandwagon that passes by will only leave you frustrated and confused. A new decade is a great time for resolutions, but it may be a more important time for thought. As you read this issue and those that will follow, keep in mind Dooley's suggestion: "The important thing is *how* you read the articles. Read positively, but above all else, read realistically."

Becky Turner

Rebecca R. Turner

veterinary economics

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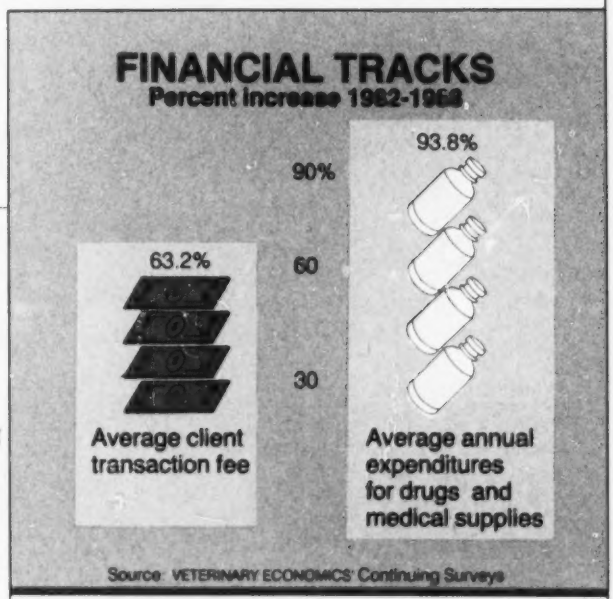


THE 1990s: PET APPEAL

As we move into the 1990s, pet ownership is at an all-time high, and the bond between man and beast grows stronger every day. If you doubt the appeal pets hold, check the TV: A recent study found that of the top 10 television commercials in 1988, four featured dogs—and only one of the ads was for dog food.

According to an article by William Ecenbarger in a recent edition of THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, "Americans are including their pets' names on their Christmas cards, taking them on vacation. . .giving them allowances. . .and claiming them (so far unsuccessfully) as income-tax deductions."

Pets are making medical news by helping to lower blood pressure, reduce stress, and decrease the risk of heart attack. Even the courts are recognizing the emotional value of animals. Until recently, pets were considered property, and any compensation for an owner's loss was limited to the market value of the animal; some verdicts now take into account the emotional damage a person suffers when he or she loses a pet.

A pet-crazy society places veterinarians under greater scrutiny but offers vast opportunity. The profession is in a prime position to provide medical care to the increasingly important and valued companion animal.

THE SUCCESS FILE

Management ideas that can make a difference — *By Bob Levoy*

How can I get 100 percent from my employees?

The first step is to recognize that there are three basic types of employees: *Compliant employees* do only what they *must* do to get by, to avoid criticism, and to keep their jobs; they will begrudgingly do what you ask. *Cooperative employees* are more agreeable about doing what you want.

Committed, loyal employees have an intense, inner desire to do the best job possible. They are more resourceful, creative, and goal-oriented. They're not limited by a job description and often do more than is expected of them—more than they're paid to do.

What accounts for employee commitment? Some of it is innate—if you spot it in a job candidate, hire the person. But keep in mind, too, that you can *nurture* loyalty through a management style that is responsive to an employee's job-related needs. You can, for example, provide recognition, appreciation, interesting and challenging work, and opportunities for growth.

Bob Levoy is a management consultant, author, and popular speaker to the veterinary profession.

COMPUTER ADVICE FROM THOSE WHO SHOULD KNOW

As preliminary preparation for the computer report in this issue, we conducted a random mini-survey that was answered by 35 computer-owning practitioners. In it, we asked, "What advice would you offer your colleagues on computerizing a practice?" Here are just a few of the responses we received:

- "Do not think a computer will save you time. It takes time to input and keep all of the information on the computer. But the benefits outweigh this problem. Access to data is faster and easier." ▶

ARE YOU READY FOR THE 1990s?

WHO OWNS A COMPUTER? WHO *WILL* OWN A COMPUTER?

A STATISTICAL PROFILE OF THE VETERINARY PROFESSION

Computers are everywhere, in practices from the tip of Maine to the MexiCali border. Here's a statistical look at computerized practices, plus a plea to computer-literate practitioners to share how pleased—or disappointed—they are with the technology.

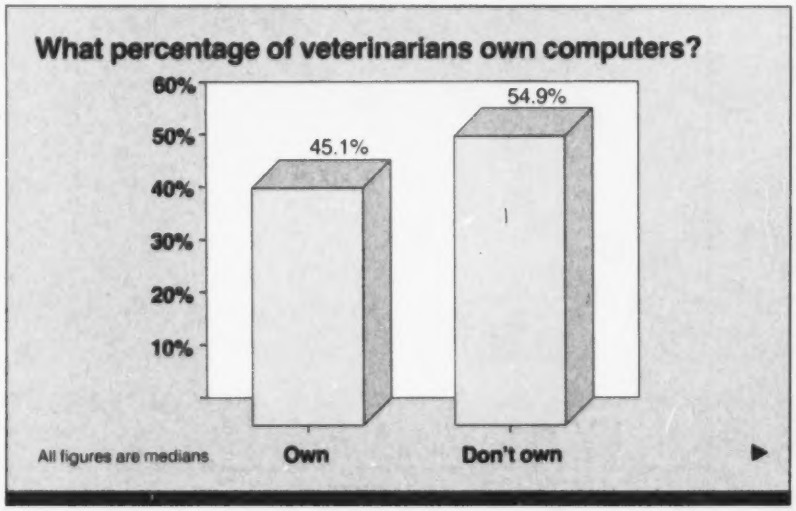
Author Robertson Davies describes himself as a "techno-moron." Word processing, he says, marks nothing short of the demise of literature as we know it. More than a few veterinarians have grumbled the same sentiment about computers in practice. Yet the computer revolution moves on, in every practice type and in every area of the country.

The VETERINARY ECONOMICS 1989 Continuing Survey shows computer-using practitioners gaining on those who've resisted, as you will see in the charts that follow. The information is based on the responses of more than 1,100 veterinarians nationwide. If the doctors who say that they are planning to purchase a computer in the next two years do so, more than 65 percent of all practitioners will own computers by 1991.

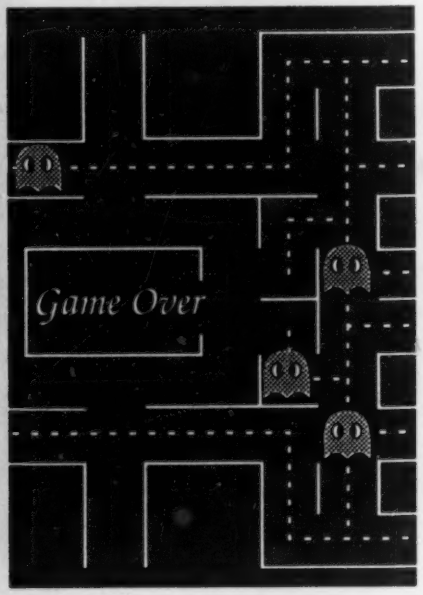
The statistical study we've compiled also shows how veterinarians use their computers. Reminders take the top slot, with word processing following closely behind. What the numbers don't show is how pleased—or disappointed—the practitioners are with these functions. To answer this question, we've provided a survey on page 57 for all of you who have taken the computer plunge. Does owning a computer mean you're happy with it?

When a computer system arrives in your practice, it's your baby and probably brings with it all of the attendant joys, adjustments, and headaches. By sharing your experiences, both good and bad, you will give yourself and your colleagues a nationwide forum for comparing notes and avoiding obstacles. We'll report on your responses this spring.

All figures in this article are medians. Research by Medical Economics Co. Inc. Research Group for VETERINARY ECONOMICS. This article is © 1990 and published by Veterinary Medicine Publishing Co. Inc. in Lenexa, KS 66215. All rights reserved. This article may not be reproduced or paraphrased in whole or in part in any manner without written permission. Limited quotations, if properly referenced, are acceptable.



Don't Get Lost in a Computer Maze!



Buying a computer management system can be like wandering through a maze. Making the right choice can affect the profitability and efficiency of your practice.

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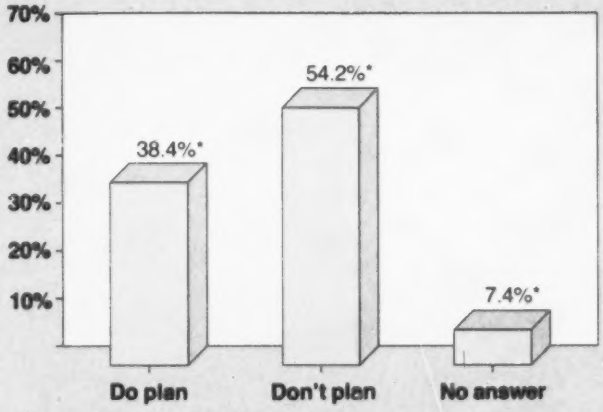
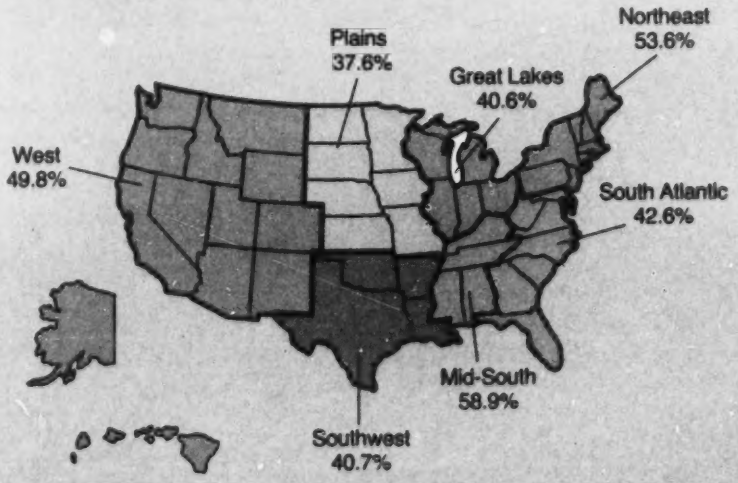
Of those DVMs who don't own a computer, what percentage plan to buy one in the next two years?



*Percent of those respondents who do not currently own a computer.

What percentage of the practitioners in each region own computers?



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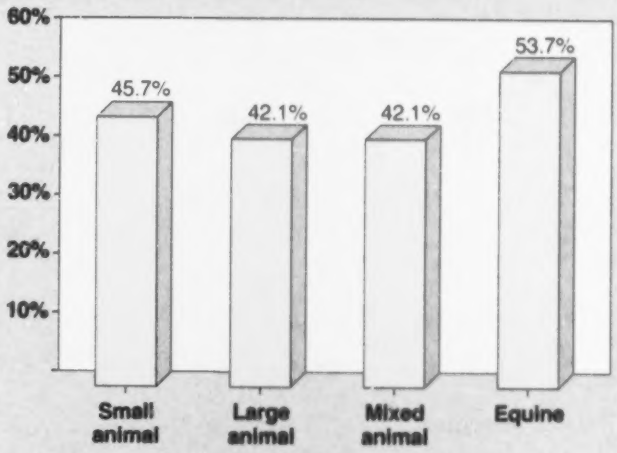
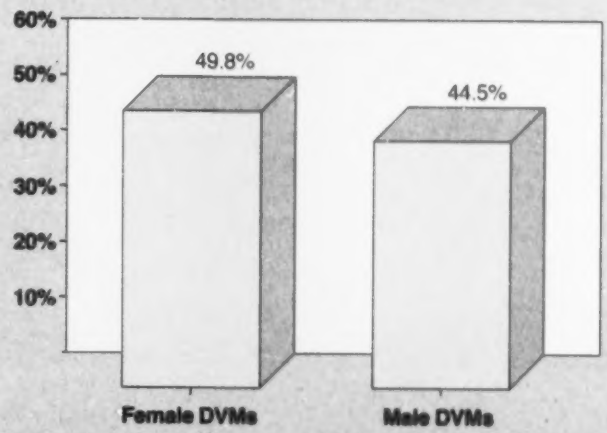
What percentage of small animal veterinarians own computers? What about large animal, mixed animal, and equine practitioners?



What percentage of female veterinarians own computers? What about male DVMs?



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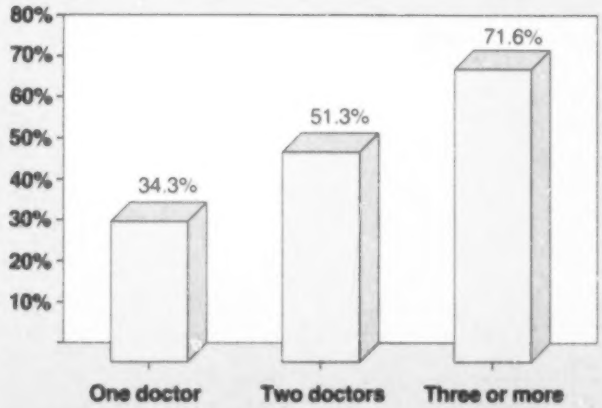
What percentage of solo practitioners own computers? What about those in group practice?



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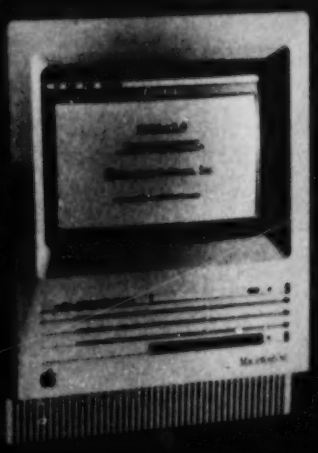

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- Integrated word processing, spreadsheet, and database package included
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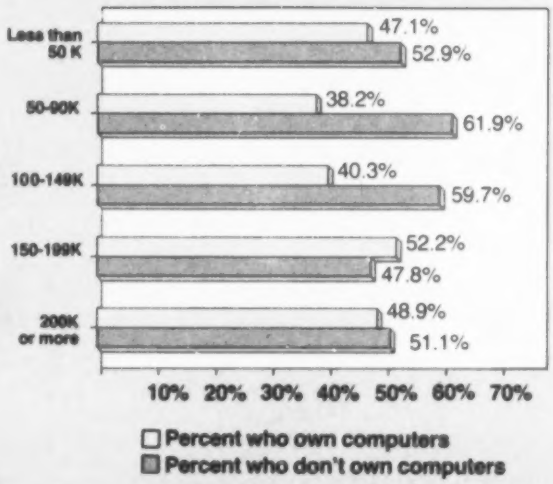
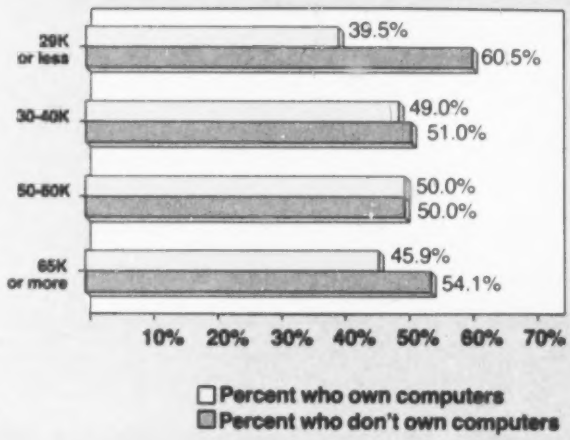
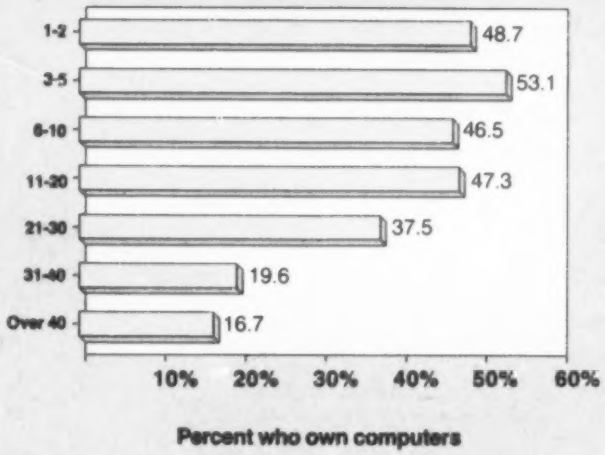
How many practitioners in each gross income category own a computer?



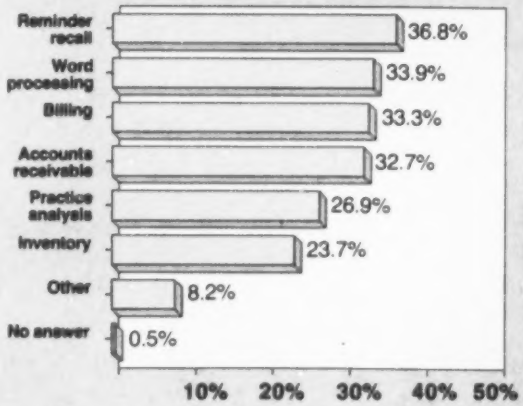
How many practitioners in each net income category own a computer?



How do computer ownership and number of years in practice compare?



What percentage of computerized practices use the following functions?



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